

VERSES BY GERTRUDE HALL



A HOPE OR TWO
A WISH OR SO
A CHILDISH TRUST IN
PREME IN STARS
THAT SWAY OUR
FATES BELOW AND
A MAY DAYS LEN-
GTH TO DREAM &



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To Mrs. Wetherell
with kind regards
Gertrude Hall

VERSES

BY

GERTRUDE HALL

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1890



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GERTRUDE HALL.

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TO MY MOTHER.

*A space of sky where the eyes may find
No edge in the restful blue,
A single flower of some sweet kind,
A memory or two,*

*A hope or two, a wish or so,
A childish trust supreme
In stars that sway our fates below,—
And a May day's length to dream.*

VERSES.



IN THE STUDY.

I TRY to fix mine eyes upon my book,
 But just without a budding spray
 Flaunts its new leaves as if to say,
 “Look!—look!”

I trim my pen, I make it fine and neat ;
 There comes a flutter of brown wings,
 A little bird alights and sings,
 “Sweet!—sweet!”

O little bird, O go away! be dumb,
 For I must ponder certain lines;—
 And straight a nodding flower makes signs,
 “Come!—come!”

O Spring, leave me alone! O bird, bloom, beam,
 I have no time to dream! I cry,—
 The echo breathes a soft, long sigh,
 “Dream! . . . dream!”

*How shall we tell an angel
From another guest ?
How, from the common worldly herd
One of the blest ?*

*Hint of suppressèd halo,
Rustle of hidden wings,
Wafture of heavenly frankincense—
Which of these things ?*

*The old Sphynx smiles so subtly :
“ I give no golden rule,—
Yet would I bid thee, world, treat well
Whom thou call'st fool.”*

TRIUMPH.

THE flowers fall thick upon his way ;
 The crowds look at his face
 As one belonging to a race
 Of taller men than they.

Henceforth a servile world will trim
 Its speech to meet his mood,
 Henceforth his deeds shall all seem good,
 Because they come of him.

After long impotence,—lo ! power ;
 After long strife and strain,
 Dreams of this hour long crushed for vain,
 Behold ! he hath his hour.

The slave that's ever at his side,
 Noting his absent eye
 Fixed vaguely between earth and sky,—
 “ His head is light—with pride.”

For once, though, hath the watch-dog erred ;
 Stranger to flowers and cheers,
 He doth but gaze back through the years
 And wonder “ Hath she heard ? ”

*How dreary looks the ivied cot,
 (Yet all is flush with May!)
 How sad the little garden plot,
 Since Mary went away.*

*At morning to her window side
 A flock of sparrows comes :
 They wait and wonder, "Where can bide
 That Mary of the crumbs?"*

*Below, the poor neglected flowers
 In languid whispers sigh,
 "Where's Mary of the grateful showers,
 Will she come by and by?"*

*And every night down in the lane,
 Just past the gate, there stands
 A youth whose face, wet with his pain,
 Is hidden in his hands. . . .*

I SAY, "ASK NOT . . ."

I SAY, "Ask not of Fortune a great name
 That through the brazen trumpet of fair Fame
 Shall to the world be told :
 Thou knowest not what loneliness awaits
 A man who climbs the great uneasy heights,
 Reaching their summit bold ;

"Neither ask thou for pleasure nor much good
 From the world's ways ; ask not its hedge-rows should
 Yield many flowers to thee,
 Nor think that God is in thy debt, if thou
 Must empty-handed and with unsunned brow
 Pass to eternity ;

"Ask not thy rosy child-dreams should come true,
 How thou shouldst sail such seas—so vast, so blue !—
 And see the strange, far lands,
 The snowfields and the palm-groves and the Waste—
 Be thou content those phantoms pleasant-faced
 Should slip from out thy hands ;

“ Ask not that health and strength should stay with thee,
Thou shouldst be saved from sore and cecity,—

Those things leave thou to God ;

Ask not, O man, for length and wealth of days,
Resignedly when God's time strikes : always !

Accept thy bed of sod.

“ Only for one that loves thee well ask thou,
For tender lips whose warmth upon thy brow

Shall stay a troubling thought,

A hand to clasp thy hand, nor let thee fall—

For happiness lies there, and that is all,

The rest is less than naught.”

*I cannot live—(what shall I do?)
With this strange thing I idolize :
Crush doth it me and martyrize,
Wear out, destroy, breathe madness to—
I cannot live—(what shall I do?)*

*Alas! I cannot live without :
If I but dream that it is gone,
For something worth still living on,
I vainly cast my heart about—
My God, I cannot live without!*

NIGHT AFTER NIGHT.

YES, I have wrestled with my giant, I :
 Night after night we twain renew our strife,
 And he, so strong I cannot get his life,
 And I, weak, yet he cannot make me die.

He wrings my sinews with a grim delight,
 He grinds my heart as in an iron screw,
 Yet I defy—and he cannot subdue,
 And so we twain wage war, night after night.

Night after night, until my life have end,
 I and my giant must stand face to face,
 He will not spare, and I shall not ask grace,
 Ground, wrung, and broken—no ! I will not bend

At length, straight-gazing in his baleful eye,
 I shall say to my giant, “Thou wast strong,
 I, weak. My foe, have we not travailed long !
 And still I am *not* vanquished—though I die.”

Be good to me! If all the world united
Should bend its powers to gird my youth with pain,
Still might I fly to thee—Dear—and be righted,—
But if thou wrongst me—where shall I complain?

I am the dove a random shot surprises,
That from her flight she droppeth quivering
And in the deadly arrow recognizes
A blood-wet feather—once in her own wing.

NAUSICAA.

HAD Jove ordained, "The Spring shall not return,
 No flower shall be henceforth in all the land,
 But heavy vapours sullen, strange, and stern,
 Shall blind the skies, and frost like a cold hand
 Shall seize the streams and stifle their sweet noise,
 And there shall be no perfumes, songs, nor joys"—
 Then might I tell the mourning Earth why burn
 My tears, knowing the Earth would understand.

Had it been written, "O'er the Sea shall rise
 Never again the Moon,—never again!
 And the sad Sea, widowed of her sweet eyes,
 Must in the dark eternally complain,
 Toss in his slumber, dreaming longing dreams
 Of the lost comfort of her soothing beams"—
 Then might I go there where the dark Sea lies,
 And pour into his pained heart my pain.

Had there been made a law against the flowers,
 That there should never more be dew at eve ;
 And through the fervent days should come no showers
 The drought of their faint sweet lips to relieve,—
 Then might I wander where the rose-tree grows,
 And lay my cheek against that of the Rose,
 And whisper, “ Oh, the great grief that is ours !
 How do the cold Immortals us bereave ! ”

But the thrice-blessèd Earth hath her desire,
 And blossoms flaunt with Spring o'er every stone ;
 The glad Sea leaps at night beneath the fire
 That flashes from the eyelids of the Moon ;
 The parchèd rose-lips drink the fragrant dew—
 And they would understand not though they knew
 What sorrows my hot heart trouble and tire,
 And I can tell them to my heart alone.

The hills wear not the pleasant face they wore,
 They seem to always tell of rain—of rain !
 The nodding roses are not as before,
 Their thorns are cruel red with heart's blood stain ;
 I conjure the old charm in vain—in vain,
 Ah me ! gone glamour will not gild again !—
 The Earth whereto the Spring shall come no more,
 The darkling Sea am I, the Rose in pain.

O little strong worms feeding at my heart,
 Regrets, do me some little grace of rest !
 One poor time let me breathe and no sigh part
 The breath that pains my heavy-laden breast ;
 Let me lie down here at the fountain-brink,
 Some kind god make me sleep and cease to think—
 Some god crush this fierce brood that will upstart,
 Remembrances, that in my deep heart nest.

Ah no!—Would the poor Earth because some god
 Had said Spring should not come, forget the Spring?
 The Sea forget the Moon's face that did flood
 His face with light, for her not forthcoming?
 The Rose forget the rain?—O faithless heart,
 Hold to thy memories till Lethe part
 Thy memories from thee, and give thy blood
 Peace for the sweet unrest that mem'ries bring.

O sweet to call up ghosts of joys that were,
 Though darkness be made darker by their light ;
 And good to dwell on happy days and fair,
 Though swifter than the wild swans in their flight ;
 And blissful, though so fraught with bitter pain,
 The living over old heart-throbs again—
 And dear, though nigh too sad for soul to bear,
 When hope is dead, dreams of once-hoped delight.

.

He came as comes the lordly sun that lends
 A glory to all things that see his face :
 And yet when to his high throne he ascends
 All that seemed gracious is less than his grace ;
 The stars fade, and the moon pales,—he is king !
 And in my heart a voice began to sing,
 “ A Sun on thee his golden glances bends,
 The shadow’s reign is o’er, it is the day’s.”

So weary seemed he, stained with sun and sea ;
 Great pity rose in me to view his plight,
 His much-enduring lips set patiently,
 The white salt stiffening his tresses bright ;
 Withal the sun-like glance strong and unmoved
 A man might wear whom a great goddess loved,
 Wore he ;—my hands involuntarily
 Let drop my ball beneath his keen eye’s sight.

He told me I was like a fair young tree,
 A slim young palm hard by Apollo’s shrine
 Once in his distant roaming chanced to see—
 A perfect-perfect thing. His eyes of mine
 Seemed sounding the far depths ; and in my heart
 The sudden-singing voice did softly start,
 “ Would that this One with traces of divine
 Lips on his brows, might bridegroom be to me ! ”

Ah Gods! the bliss of one sweet day that came!
 Good Gods, the endless good one day can hold!
 How can for one brief space blood flow like flame
 And life's o'er-gilded dross be counted gold—
 How can a flushed dream paint the grey, mcrose
 World's face to the deep colours of a rose—
 How can warm tides of hopes without a name
 Over the lowlands of a life be rolled!

And then—and then the dross again—the grey;
 The wasted lowlands when the flood is past;
 The cheerless wakening in a rainy day—
 The desperate white arms hopelessly cast
 Over a burning head bowed and discrowned;
 And then—lips labouring to make this sound:
 “Farewell, O stranger. When thou art away
 Think thou of me sometimes—for, at the last,

'Twas I that gave thy life to thee—and I
 Shall think of thee often enough, doubt not,
 When thou art roofed by some more clement sky.”
 And then—and then a swiftly lessening spot
 On the grey sea—Adieu! O breeze-blown bark
 And then—over the ruin, the dark—the dark!
 And then—here at the fountain-brink I lie,
 And in the waters chill my tears fall hot.

*O Knight, if thou a Lady hast,
Gentle and loving, high and true,
Cling to her, live for her, die for her, too,
Swerve not from her while life shall last—
O Knight, if thou a Lady hast.*

*But if thou, Knight, no Lady hast,
Kind as courteous, fair as fond,
So grasp the joyless pilgrim's-wand,
Go high, go wide, go far and fast—
Till thou e'en such a Lady hast.*

SURRENDER.

THEN lead me, Friend. Here is my hand,
 Not in dumb resignation lent
 Because thee one cannot withstand—
 In love, Lord, with complete consent.

Lead—and I, not as one born blind
 Obeys in sheer necessity,
 But one with muffled eyes designed,
 Will blindly trust myself to thee.

Lead.—Though the road thou mak'st me tread
 Bring sweat of anguish to my brow
 And on the flints my track be red,
 I will not murmur—It is thou.

Lead.—If we come to the cliff's crest
 And I hear deep below—O deep!—
 The torrent's roar, and "Leap!" thou sayst,
 I will not question—I will leap.

*I so love life, for the sake of life,
And breath for the love of breath,
A song for the splendid sake of song,
A word for what it saith.*

*For no far end, no gain, no pleasure,
Nor good that comes thereof:
But measured words just for worded measure
I love—for the sake of love.*

FRIENDS.

I.

MY life is so much pleasanter for thee :
I bless the hour when thy life's path met mine,
 When thine ascending star crossed my star's line,
 When thou in friendship gav'st thy hand to me.
 I bless the fate that willed this thing to be :
 That our lives' threads should tangle and combine
 So sweetly,—though some day they must untwine,
 And one lead to the hill, one to the sea.
 One to the sea, one to the mountain-ways,
 One to the golden west, one to the east,
 One to the torrid zone, one to the snow ;
 How sad 'twill seem to me ! and this not least :
 To think that though so many, many days
 Thou knewest me, thou really ne'er didst know.

II.

And I must say : two volumes old were we,
 High on some scholar's shelf set side by side,
 Pronounced in gold, writ on the stout brown hide,
 One, say : a Missal ; one : A Mystery ;

And though we came in such proximity,
One being closed with clasps, one being tied,
Each failed to know what the other's leaves might hide.
Nor was that all: though thou hadst seen in me,
I was writ in a tongue thou didst not know;
Though thou hadst learned the tongue, the writing was
So strangely blurred it would have been no good;
Though thou by dint of study hard and slow
Deciphered hadst the words with many a pause—
The matter thou wouldst not have understood.

*Last night when stars their softest shone,
One came to me in dream and said :*

*“ Forlorn thy days are, Loving One,
For I have long been dead.*

*“ And I who lived so long ago,
My earthly days, too, were forlorn,
For thou whom I had cherished so
Hadst not yet then been born.”*

THE SWINE-HERD.

POOR Lucas ! one that used to wreath
 With flowers his knotty swine-herd's staff,
 And startle echoes from their sleep
 With his long laugh.

Until, pursuing swine that strayed,
 Deep 'mong the wooded hills he ran
 One eve,—returning thence at dawn
 A changèd man.

A shadow filled his absent eyes
 Not known to darken them before ;
 The echoes slumbered, by his voice
 Disturbed no more.

No blossoms twined he round his staff ;
 He bent a still face toward earth ;
 On his once merry lips was seen
 No sign of mirth.

As in a dream he moved, and stared,
 And when one spoke was seen to start ;
 Vainly his brethren asked what thing
 Troubled his heart.

And seasons changed, and many years
 Declined and died and passed away,
 And now he watched his bristled herd,
 Aged and grey ;

And now he lay upon the straw,
 And they said softly : “ Ere day break,
 Poor soul ! in his sad heart shall life
 Have ceased to ache.”

And vaguely then with failing breath
 He hinted at a vision strange,
 Seen between dusk and dawning, once
 When he did range

In search of his lost swine—ah, gods !
 Such heavenly sights he scarce could name—
 And how since that the world had seemed
 Never the same.

.

He died.—God have us all in ruth,
For many haply be there yet
Who given glimpse of glories strange,
Cannot forget ;

Who being shown in one swift glance
Supreme bliss almost within touch,
Waste life in longings vain—I pray
God pity such.

*Far better than a great gift granted,
Is, to my thought,
A little gift, not asked, not wanted,
From one that owes one naught.*

*Had I the giving of some great gift,
It should be spent
On one with never a hope to lift
To aught so magnificent.*

O MES AMOURS.

Foulquet Trélunes sings :

O MES Amours ! I used to dream
 The flowers very fair,
 Broad lilies floating in the stream,
 Blossoms the peach trees bear ;
 Women, my heart used to declare
 A saintly sisterhood,
 O mes Amours !—and now
 Nothing seems fair nor good,
 But only thou.

O mes Amours ! I used to hold
 Some things worth a man's pains ;
 Sometime I would have given for gold
 The good blood in my veins,
 Yea, my young blood for worldly gains
 And pleasant things of earth,
 O mes Amours !—and now
 All things have lost their worth,
 But only thou,

O mes Amours! I used to muse
 What great things I should do,
What glory through this world diffuse,
 And other worlds subdue.
While monsters such as none e'er slew
 Beneath my lance should fall,
 O mes Amours!—and now
Nothing matters at all,
 But only thou.

*Go, happy bird! Go, seek the lovely clime
 Whence cruel chances ravished thee one day;
 Blind yearning for whose balm makes oftentime
 So pitiful thy lay.*

*Go, happy bird! Forget thy prisony:
 Or think of it but with the soft heart-swell
 We prove on hearing mournful songs, when we
 Are fortunate and well.*

*Go, envied bird!—Happy, O bird, in this:
 Thou hast not dwelt so long in gilded wire
 Thy freedom thou art reconciled to miss,
 Nor carest to wing higher,*

*Happy—thou hast not sung from golden bars,
 Till thou hast ceased thy bitter war to wage
 Against them, and forgot the face of stars,
 And learned to love thy cage.*

I SOMETIMES HOPE. . . .

I SOMETIMES hope I may die in my youth,
 Before my life quite satiated be
 With living, and be burdened with *ennui*,
 And bitten with regret's corroding tooth ;

Before the glory have ceased from the skies,
 And shade and shine and shower be all the same,
 And star and cloud and flower fail to claim
 The wonder of my failing, faded eyes ;

Before to ashes all my fires have burned
 And all my roses have been killed with snow,
 And in what silent tomb I may not know
 My memory lie quietly inurned ;

And I forget the dear face of the past,
 Forget the blessed face of my first love,—
 Whilst in my veins the pulses scarcely move,
 That leap so now and beat so hot and fast ;

Before my sweet illusions all be slain
 And all my hopes have fallen like dead leaves,
 And all my joys be reaped and bound in sheaves,
 And ruined all my castles built in Spain ;

Before my tale of treasures be quite told,
And drained my tears and their deep fountains dried—
Ah yes, oft in my dreaming have I cried :

“God let me die before I have grown old!”

Die when I reach the summit of the hill,
With all the glorious heavens full in sight,
My sun still shining hot and high and bright,
And all my pleasant song birds singing still,

And my heart full of songs as their sweet throats,—
Die in my strength, and go the ways of death
With eyelids full of dreams, and my last breath
Made sweet with the last kiss that in it floats.

*Dearer than rubies beading
 A Pharaonid's crown,
 A rosy hope by whose light
 To rise and to lie down :*

*Ev'n in its soft seceding
 From worlds of dim dream-shine,
 My soul exclaims : " Good morning,
 Beautiful hope of mine !"*

*On seas of sleep receding—
 Ship almost out of sight—
 My soul sends its last message :
 " Beautiful hope, good-night !"*

SUMMER-MOON.

WHEN the stupid people were not looking
 —They sat in shadow of the sail—
 I softly slid down the plunging boat-bow
 To the trembling waters, glimmering pale.

I said to myself, "Now I will follow
 The long white track of this summer moon;
 Since a little child I have burned and longed to,
 And this sweet night is never too soon."

How the waters danced 'neath my light, swift foot-
 steps,
 How cool they seemed to my eager feet!
 I gathered my white things closely about me,
 But my hair was caught by the breezes sweet,

And they loosened and spread it and held it floating;
I looked before and never behind :
I hurried on in the lustrous pathway
Where light was the moon and shadow the wind.

O the sweet long path of silver and diamond !
O the joyous splendour I travelled o'er !
I said to myself, " No—I never, never,
Trode such a beautiful path before ! "

I seemed alone on the whole great ocean :
The sky bent down to the water's rim
On every side, and kissed it so closely
It trembled as if with deep love for him.

I stooped to gather the white foam-flowers
Till my hands were full of the creamy things,
Then I bound them with a long sea-ribbon—
I understood what the old sea sings,

Just for a while ;—I listened intently,
And all at once it occurred to me,
And it was something very important—
But has escaped my memory.

The dolphins rose and stared at my passing,
 I waved my gathered flowers to them;
 They must have wondered that I could wander
 So far without wetting my garment's hem.

How far I went and I was not tired!
 How far I went in the moon's white way!—
 But all at once aught came against me
 That made my footsteps falter and stay:

A white face 'neath a veil of water,
 With golden loose hair streaming round—
 I stooped to kiss it and sighed unto it,
 "I am so sorry you were drowned!"

Now the moon approached the low sea-level,
 I thought "I must hurry all I can"—
 I gathered the white folds closer and higher
 And over the swelling billows ran.

The moon was half way down the water
 When panting I reached the silvern gate—
 How great it was, and white and fulgent!—
 I knocked, and hoped it was not too late.

The guardian came and looked and pondered,
Then asked, "Little maid, have you ever died?"
And I said, "Nay." And he said sadly,
"Little maid, in vain then you have tried."

So I was forced to turn and leave it ;
The beautiful guardian said, "Some day" . . .
And I came home with saddened footsteps
Over a moonless darkling way.

*When I was little I used to gaze
Where in the deep, dark air
The white stars used to blink and blaze
Like friendly, sleepy diamond-eyes,
And wonder what they were.*

*And now, it has been all explained,
The mystery of a star,—
And still with eyelids upward strained,
I stand with my dull knowledge gained,
And wonder what they are.*

PAUSE.

AND so, when I had passed much waste, much
 sand,
 And marsh, and grassy tangle ankle-deep,
 I reached the long-desired borderland,
 And here have laid me down and gone to sleep.

And I speak dreaming on a green leaf lair,
 Upon the threshold of an unknown place,
 Feeling a gentle wind blow through my hair,
 A friendly sun lie softly in my face.

The ferns are sweet : I know them in my sleep,
 Bright are the birds : I see them through my lids,
 And how the feathery tree-tops grandly sweep
 The azure as a wanton west wind bids.

Musk-odours heavy-sweet steal o'er my sense,
 And mystic water-voices reach my ear,
 As I lie still, half-conscious of intense
 Rich tints a-bloom about me ev'rywhere.

Ah, rest is good—so good—so very good,
 Upon the frontier of a promised land,
 Whereof, by no sign have we understood
 What it may hold that we shall understand.

Ah, very good it is to pause and sleep,
 A quiet face turned to the sunlight warm,
 Heedless of all the morrows for us keep—
 Even as Christ Our Lord slept in the storm.

A phantom from the misty future days
 Prophetically whispers through my dreams,—
 But I smile at the dreary things it says,
 All gilded as I lie in the sun's beams.

A cold hand stretched to me from far away,
 Touches my hair full of the wind's sweet breath,—
 And still I dream and smile, as smile I may,
 Well knowing as I know that it is Death.

“At the horizon, see, a cloud appears;
 A flake now, soon a dark and mighty isle—
 'Twill overcast thy sky—hast thou no fears?”
 But I lie still and smile—and dream and smile.

“The ways are long and sad,” a ghost-voice moans,
“They wind beneath a tearless torrid sky,
And they are strewn with whitening human bones—”
But I lie dreaming,—smiling as I lie.

Ah, yes,—all that to-morrow,—but to-day
I lie at peace here on the bourn and smile;
So, vain forebodings, pass and go your way,
For I will sleep and dream a little while.

The wind is in my hair, and on my face
The sun lies like a well-belovèd hand,—
To-morrow I will rise and run the race,
To-day will sleep here on the borderland.

*The rose is such a lady—
 So stately, fresh and sweet :
 It joys to hold her image
 The rain pool at her feet.*

*They look such common lasses
 Those red pinks in a line,
 The rose is such a lady
 So dignified and fine.*

*The winds would wish to kiss her
 And yet they scarcely dare,
 The rose is such a lady—
 So courteous, pure, and fair.*

*Here's one come from a garden
 To die within this book—
 See, in the faded features
 The old lady-like look!*

SER TORELLO.

ME too, at perfumed close of day
 When earliest stars their eyes unveil,
 And pilgrims, doubting, ask their way,
 Me, too, soft thoughts of love assail ;

Dim longings, vague desires betray
 To sighs without cause or avail ;
 Me, whose day laughter peals so gay,
 A night-long passion makes so pale :

A shadow stands beside my bed
 Evoked from out a world of dreams ;
 Behind the veil that swathes its head,
 Mysterious, a soft glance gleams ;
 "My love—art thou of this our earth ?
 Hast thou seen death ?" I ask "—or birth ?"

Tringuello sings :

*O darling dream, born between dusk and dawning,
Sent me of God in pity for my lot,
To comfort me of my life's sunless morning—
O darling dream, forsake me not!*

*My heart clings to thy whiteness, brightness,
sweetness,
My heart born to a sullen, sunless day,
That ne'er had known a joy of such completeness—
O darling dream, fade not away!*

ROCKING SONG.

FLIGHTS of white cloud pigeons,
 Flocks of white cloud sheep,
 Float o'er the hills of heaven
 And in its pastures sleep. . .

Thirteen little linnets
 Lived in one same nest,
 Nor ever asked their mother
 Which was prettiest. . . .

Scores of dark-eyed pansies
 Blossomed side by side,
 The butterfly most favoured
 One that was cross-eyed. . . .

Some say that every cricket
 Plays on a mandolin,
 And that the sly moth miller
 Is not what he has been. . . .

Nine grown-up peas in one pod,
 And each one passing sweet,
 But I like baby-peas best—
 I mean, of course, to eat! . . .

Come, let us seek together
The Palace of the King,
There, in the treasure-chamber
Is such a pretty thing. . . .

But all around are warders
And such stout watch they keep
No little child can enter—
Except he is asleep. . . .

Then close thy pretty eyelids,
My tender friend, and rest,
So we shall see the wonders
In the King's treasure-chest ! . . .

*See in the sun-steeped garden-bed
How gay the summer rose!
And on what long-hushed lip it's fed
Nobody knows.*

*One laughs with all her pretty teeth,
So happy!—they suppose,
And of the heart-break underneath
Nobody knows.*

*Lightly one reads a little song,—
And all the dreaming goes
To make a ditty twelve lines long
Nobody knows.*

I SHALL NOT REACH. . . .

I SHALL not reach the height whereon ye stand,
 My masters! I was made of flimsier stuff;
 Where ye wert steadfast granite, I am sand,
 I am not brave to climb,—nor strong enough.

In making me dame Nature somehow erred,
 As if a bird should be born without wing,
 Or with the singing instincts of a bird
 Should have no joyous voice wherewith to sing.

There is a flaw in me,—strange, incomplete,
 Am I,—I shall not reach the sunlit height
 Whereon ye stand, my masters!—My defeat
 Is writ e'en now by my recorded fight.

Yet, yet, disown me not. By all that breathes,
 I say I am your kin—(Have I not knelt
 Humbly enough to touch your deathless wreaths?)
 So greatly I have hoped, so deeply felt.

*The vine is barely in flower,
And it's only the time for seed—
But I claim, I ache for, I need
My harvest this very hour.*

*O Mother, leave saying that thing!
Does it make life soother to bear,
To know that when Autumn is there,
One is sure to weep for the Spring?*

TO POESY.

ONCE, long ago, it might have been, that I
 Could be deterred from following after thee ;
 When I had scarcely seen thy face, a sigh
 Might have been all that face's cost to me.

I might have gone some sunny rose-strewn way,
 Light beating heart untroubled by regret,
 Might have, perchance, by diligent assay,
 Forgotten thee—if thee one may forget !

Once, once it might have been. But now thy feet
 Mark surely on the sands where I must go ;
 It is too late—too late now for retreat !
 Lead on ! and whither ask not I to know.

For be it to what depth or to what height,
 What living glory or eternal death,
 I feel that I must follow, goddess bright,
 So lead—lead on ! I come while I have breath.

For having known thee, there is no retrieve,
It is not choice to go with thee, but fate ;
Thy free pursuer am not I, but slave,
I love, yet still must follow did I hate.

Then be thou kind to me,—spare if thou mayst,
I am so at thy mercy,—thou so strong!—
For captives that thy chariot have graced
Hast thou no grace but lingering death and long?

*At the cross-roads, in green April,
 Paused the hero doubtfully:
 Up one sun-lit road stood Glory
 Smiling 'neath a laurel-tree.*

*And the Knight cried: "Thou art lovely,—
 Thou art all a queen"—cried he,
 "And thou smilest,—and I worship,—
 But I will not go to thee.*

*"Down yon path where naught allureth
 Bids the call of Chivalry,—
 If at last we are together,
 'Twill be thou hast followed me."*

IN THE ART MUSEUM.

HE stands where the white light showers,
 In his wonted, high recess ;
 The dust has woven a soft veil
 Over his comeliness.

Beneath the pensive eyebrows
 And lids that never beat,
 The same glance floats for ever—
 So sad and solemn-sweet ;

The same peace seals for ever
 The full lips finely curled,—
 I'm come to this his dwelling
 To bring him news of the world :

"Once more the Spring hath mantled
 With green the lasting hills—
 Hast thou no faint remembrance
 Of daisies and daffodils ?

" Their stems still lengthen sunward
 As when thou wast of us,—
 My heart swells with its sorrow
 For thee—Antinous."

*Could I not be the pilgrim
To reach my saint's abode,—
I would make myself the road
To lead some other pilgrim
Where my soul's-treasure glowed.*

*Could not I in the eager van
Be the stalwart pioneer
Who points where the way is clear,—
I'd be the man who sinks in the swamp,
And cries to the rest: "Not here!"*

KING DAVID.

FOR seven days, while 'twixt hope and despair
 His little child's life hung, David the King,
 Lay prostrate on the earth in anguished prayer
 That God would save the frail, beloved thing.

But on the seventh day, when his men came
 There where in tears he bowed his humbled head,
 And looking up when they had called his name,
 He in their faces saw, his child was dead,—

He rose, and washed himself, so the Book says,
 And did himself annoint and clothe anew,—
 And turning from the sorrowful old days,
 He set a brave, still face against the new.

So ye, poor souls, that for lost treasures mourn,
 Cease weeping o'er irrevocable things,—
 Turn from the sullen west to the white dawn,
 And watch and wait for what the new day brings.

*What will Time give for youth we lose,
For dense, bright hair, and lip of rose,
For flowers wherewith Spring heaps our laps,
For trust in words, and faith in shows,
And all the castle-dreams he saps?*

*For wealth of hair, and lip of rose,
For faith in promises and shows,
For buds of May heaped in your laps,
What Time will give ye?—Ah, who knows?
.....Patience, perhaps.*

*WHEN THE BIRDS WILL ALL HAVE
DIED.*

O SAD will be the buttercups
And balsams white and pied,
And sad will be the wood and plain
When the birds will all have died.

The comely roses' purple cheeks
With grieving will grow pale,
So sad will be the Summer night
Without the nightingale.

No swallow building 'neath the eaves,
No robin in the tree,
No cuckoo, thrush, or oriole,
Or painted colibri,—

No halcyon brooding o'er the wave,
No white dove on the wing,
Nor red flamingoes strutting through
The gardens of the king !

The dawn will come as still as death,
With ne'er a singing lark,
And joyless as one stricken dumb
The day will turn to dark.

And we shall clasp our hands and cry :
“ Ah God ! Ah ! how I long
For one sweet-throated bird to sing
Even a foolish song.”

*I am so lost, so lonely,
 When my Muse gives me up,
 I liken myself only—
 So lost am I, so lonely!—
 When all its petals strewn lie,
 To some poor flower-cup.
 I am so lost, so lonely,
 When my Muse gives me up.*

*But when my Muse has smiled
 On me with her large look,
 I'm like a beggar-child—
 When my fair Muse has smiled!—
 Whom some white queen and mild
 Has lent a picture-book—
 When my fair Muse has smiled
 On me with her large look.*

LAZARUS.

IN those days, in the rank growth of my strength,
 The red flower of my life, my sunny youth,
 When all the world seemed beautiful to me
 Seen with my clear, good eyes—acquainted not
 With tears as they have been these last long years,
 These heavy years, God knows,—it happened so
 I was down-smitten with a sudden ill.

Burning I lay, besieged with fever-dreams,
 Aching, throbbing, in restless misery,
 Wasting, thirsting. My sister Magdalene,
 The golden-headed, bent o'er me and wept ;
 I reached my hands to feel her long, soft hair
 That seemed so pleasing cool to my hot palms,
 Sweet perfumed braids of shining wavy hair
 Wreathing her head I loved. To my dim sense
 She seemed a phantom in a dream, and near,
 My sister Martha kneeling with her face
 Hid in her hands, an empty vision too.
 Only my pain seemed true. Thick shadows swarmed,
 Now hideous, now beautiful, about
 My head I turned and tossed so wearily
 Upon the heated, haunted, hateful couch,
 Through hours whereof each seemed eternity.

A white-clad thing breathed in my face and said :
 "I am a day last Spring—hast thou forgot ?
 I climbed the hills and reached the cloudless sky.
 I stretched my white arms over all the place
 And blessed the world. The dew dropped from my
 hands.

I was the sweetest day in all the year—
 Dost not remember me?" And my vague eyes,
 So tired, tired, fixed upon her face,
 Endeavoured to recall the lines thereof
 That fainter grew the more they strained and
 strove.

Then a voice said, "Hast thou forgotten *me* ?"
 And my heart leapt and bounded crazily,
 Rememb'ring half and half forgetting, and
 I gathered all my strength to try to think
 What voice it was that stirred my entrails so—
 Hasting, as though the light were waning fast
 And I could never think if it were dark,
 Hasting, hastening—yet the darkness came
 And drowned my thought and me. And then I
 saw

A slight, white moon afloat in a deep sky
 Of orange-colour, little maiden moon,
 And sadly thought, "She will grow great with
 griefs."

One night, deep in the night, I woke ; a light
 Was glimmering faintly on the shadowy walls,
 And Magdalene had fall'n asleep in pray'r,
 Her arms flung o'er my bed by which she knelt.
 And I began to long for the sweet dawn ;
 To long that I might rise and go and feel
 The dewy grass beneath my naked feet.

“ When I am well ! ” I thought, “ when I am well ! ”—

And then my heart paused—and a horror passed
 Through my hair like chill wind, and as a blow
 The thought fell on me, I was going to die.

“ O Magdalene ! O Martha ! Magdalene !

Quick, Magdalene ! ” I cried aloud, and seized
 My head in my two hands and wildly rose.

Then Magdalene's sweet arms were around me,

And my mad head was resting on her breast,

Soothed by her pitiful, kind hands, and wet

With tears of hers. “ Nay, dearest, nay, not die—”

She murmured, sobbing hard, “ Nay, nay, not die—

Thou hast been dreaming, 'twas an evil dream—

Ah nay, thou must not die : I should die too ! ”

And many times she kissed my wasted face.

“ To-morrow, when the sun comes, one shall go

And tell thy friend that loves thee thou art sick ;

Tell the Lord Jesus, and the Lord will come

To thee, my brother,—come and make thee whole.”

Like to the comfort of the quiet rain
 Upon the wilting, hopeless flower-lips,
 The hope-forgotten, sunburnt, weary plains,
 The words fell upon me. "Ah, yes,—the Lord,
 The Good One. He should touch me with his
 hand,
 And look on me, and all my pain should cease,
 Beneath the luminous deep eyes of him,
 The hands unclosed to bless. Send for the Lord."

And confident in him I lapsed in sleep.
 And the red dawn came slowly; and I watched
 As I could, through the burning and the dreams
 That filled my swimming head, and bubble-like
 Kept rising there, then burst and were forgot,
 Watched for his coming. Through my aching veins
 The lava-like blood throbbed, and ev'ry throb
 Said, "He will be here soon—yea, soon—yea,
 soon."

And I tried to be patient, suff'ring so.
 My memory is filled with great, dull blanks,
 Like a vast desert with few places green.
 I caught between the stretches of dark waste
 Brief visions of an unknown, golden-haired,
 Tall woman, weeping over my thin hands,
 And sorry faces bending over me.

I babbled, when the strange world met my eyes,
 And I remembered I was Lazarus,—
 Poor Lazarus nailed to a bed of pain,—
 “Has Jesus come—has my friend Jesus come?”
 And dully moaned when they said, “Nay, not
 yet.”

Oh, how I waited longingly and watched!
 At first the hope of life was strong in me,
 And I thought, “If He comes I shall be saved!”
 But afterwards, when my poor flame burned low,
 And my knife’s edge was blunted, and my pain,
 Even my pain seemed pain felt in a dream,
 I thought, “Only to see His face once more—
 His blessed face!—then death will all be ease.”

My senses all were strained and strung to catch
 The soft sound of His footfall drawing near—
 “O Magdalene! hie to the roof and see
 Whether my Lord be coming.”—“Nay, not yet.”
 Then weak tears rose and wholly blinded me,
 In silent agony I bit my hands.

In midst the faces peopling all the dark,
 The hungry, haggard faces with wide eyes
 That stared at me so cold and meaningless,

I pierced and peered and tried to find His face,—
 Belovèd face with peace stamped on the brows,
 Which but to look at giveth a heart peace,—
 But it was never there. Sometimes I rocked
 Myself with sweet illusions, pictured Him
 Fast on His way to me. I e'en could hear
 The rustle of His garments as He passed,
 A great fair shape against the yellow sky ;
 Beneath the palm-trees—over the warm sands—
 A flock of camel-drivers with their beasts
 Have hindered Him—a woman with a jar
 Has stopped to crave His blessing—now He comes :
 His earnest face is turned against my house—
 I feel the virtue of His presence near,
 The pity for me streaming from His eyes—
 “ Rabboni ! O my Master ! praise to God !
 O praise to God, that Thou art come at last ! ”
 And in a wild delirium of joy
 I stretched my rapturous arms to Him, and fixed
 Deluded eyes upon the emptiness—
 And then the spectre passed—and the death-dews
 Were gathering on my temples, and the light
 Began to ebb from my hot heavy eyes.
 A quiet tide seemed creeping over me,
 Filling my nostrils, stopping the short breath,
 Drowning me, parting me from the bright world

With smooth, cool, grateful waves murmuring low.
 I thought, "Let the sea take me, carry me
 Away, away, where one may find some rest."
 And then the great love for that Absent One
 Surging in me, and ruth for Magdalene,—
 Weak as I was, a wan flame nearly spent,
 A mockery of what was Lazarus,—
 Recalled me from the threshold of the shade.
 I battled with the dark, encroaching waves,
 "I *will* not die till I have said farewell
 To my sweet friend, Jesus of Nazareth,"
 I cried,—and they had mercy for a while.

Yet in the end must I resign my breath,
 Yield up to God the spirit that He gave,
 Forego the warmth, the light, the pleasant things
 That fill the earth's face, so that Jehovah
 Beholding it pronounced it very good.
 "He will not come—and I can wait no more!"

The mists rolled from my brain and I could see
 Far clearer than I ever saw before
 Death's hand had touched and consecrated me ;
 Bathed in a strong white light the faces seemed,
 With clear thin lines, serene and glorified.

I begged them turn my face toward the door
 Through which the Lord must come if come He
 should,

And sick at heart with vain expectancy,
 I died, my dim eyes fixed upon the door,
 Dreadfully widened with a fruitless hope
 Of seeing his dear shadow bar the light.

They say I lay four days within my grave,
 I, Lazarus, that tell you this.

Down deep,

Down fathom-deep in some black, frozen sea
 I seemed at once to wake and find myself
 Weighed down by leaden, moveless, blind, cold
 waves.

And then, as if at some supreme command,
 The waters, quiv'ring, seemed to let me loose---
 I rose and rose and rose through the chill dark
 That grew less dark as still I rose and rose—
 Then all the stars in heaven seemed to fall
 Into my eyes, and blind and dazzle me.
 A voice cried, "Lazarus, come forth!" My heart,
 Thrilled through, leapt hard against my hollow ribs,
 And all my being—each least fibre of me,
 Trembled and answered, "Lord, I come—I come!"

So He was there at last, and not in vain
Had been the weary waiting, the long watch.
I tottered, being bound in my grave-clothes,
And came to the grave's door.—Ah ! sweet, sweet
 world,
Ah ! sunlight, rose-smell, white clouds, verdurous
 hills,
Soft sounds, sights, warm winds, waters, women,
 birds—
O the deep joy of breathing ! O the bliss !
Of all the faces crowding the cave's mouth
I only saw His face turned toward me ;
I stumbled to His feet—and my glad eyes
Rested upon those sweet, compassionate,
Divine great eyes of His that swam with tears,
And told Him all my lips could never tell.

*Love me or love me not, yet what shall hinder
My soul from breathing blessings on thy name?
Be far less kind, or oh, so little kinder,
My love must be the same.*

*Nor need she care, the Empress great and golden,
When she with sleep her beauty doth restore,
And dreams, in jealous majesty enfolden,
What slave lies at her door.*

IN APRIL.

THE winds had been foretelling
 Mysteriously that morn,
 How, soon, from Earth, the Mother,
 The sweet Spring should be born ;
 And sitting by the river,
 Now from its ice-bonds freed,
 This is what a Faun piped
 Upon his hollow reed.

He piped : Soft beds of grasses
 Spread out 'neath a blue roof,
 And tepid waters, soothing
 To a tired brown faun's hoof ;
 Broad stretches of warm sunshine
 With lapses of cool shade,
 And ripening berries making
 Red blots in a green glade.

He piped : One glossy cherry
 For each white blossom-star ;
 Long trains of dappled swallows
 Home-flying from afar,
 And all the brown fauns tuning
 Their pipes for concerts sweet,
 And all the meadows dimpled
 With dancing of nymphs' feet.

And then : Wild flowers springing
 Where'er a good seed blows,
 And in the sheltered gardens
 That marvel, the red rose,
 And singing birdlings building
 Their nests with many pains,
 And rosy little children
 Fashioning daisy-chains.

Moreover : Jewels scattered
 Lavishly on the grass,
 White dew-drops in the lilacs,
 That tremble, shine, and pass ;
 Winds full of sweet confusion
 With hum and buzz and trill,
 And lazy white clouds lolling
 Leisurely on the hill.

The old brown Faun sat piping,
The air was cool and keen,
And still he piped : A little,—
And all the trees are green !
A little,—and the roses
Break from the thorny spray !
For I heard a low voice saying
Spring should be born to-day.

*Thou by the river musing,
Maid of few summer-tides,
With dreamy eyes perusing
Thy looking-glass that glides:*

*Somewhere the ship is booming
Whose hold thy treasure hides,
Somewhere the castle looming
Where thy true love abides.*

*Somewhere the wreath is blowing
To crown thy hair a bride's—
Somewhere the stout oak growing
To make thy coffin sides.*

DISILLUSION.

I INTO the waste I came, and did not know
 It for a waste : 'twas peopled with my
 dreams,
 I did not know for dreams ; and fair of show
 It was, a land of milk and honey streams.

Out of myself I lent it red and green,
 And if some fruit that on the dream-boughs
 grew
 Was hollow, proved, that was so glorious, seen,
 I patched the olden broken dreams with new.

So on, from dream to dream. But now 'tis o'er,
 My heart with long dream-labour weary grown,
 Has not the strength to build me phantoms
 more,
 And in the waste—a waste,—I stand alone.

Only the sands that strange tracks of the wind
 Strangely divide in melancholy bars,
 Only the marks strange hoofs have left behind,
 Only, above, the disenchanted stars.

Bewildered I cry out, "Is this the place?
Are those the stars? Where is my world—
my own?"
"Those are the stars,—dost not thou know their
face?
This is the place—only the dreams are gone."

And I fall prostrate on the cold, stripped sod,
To shun those stars with their unmeaning gleam,
And build one last great dream of hope in God,—
My heart asks shudd'ring, "*Is* it too a
dream? . . ."

*I lie and stare, I lie and stare,
 And what I feared seems fast my lot,—
 I call thee and thou comest not,
 I seek thee—and thou art not there.*

*Art thou, Sleep, as the worldling is,
 Friends only with the lightsome heart?
 • And is it writ thou shalt depart
 All eyelids Care hath marked for his?*

*Then go. Less sadly I resign
 Thine offices, O cool and sweet,—
 That in the end we still must meet,
 And thou eternally be mine.*

A FANCY.

A YELLOW lion great and strong
 Now that my little dog is dead,
 I wish to have in his dear stead—
 A tawny lion great and strong,

It would be my ambition
 To have a pet that might eat me
 Just when he chose, quite easily,
 Yet wouldn't,—my ambition.

I'd like to hold his great rough head
 Upon my lap, and smoothe his mane
 And bind it with a daisy-chain—
 The great magnificent rough head.

I'd like to look into his eyes
 As fierce to all as fierce might be,
 Yet tender with deep love to me—
 The gold-encircled, strange, great eyes.

And see them say: "We have forgot
 The jungle old, the old fierce mate,
 In love of thee we have of late
 All but the love of thee forgot."

To have him crouching at my feet,—
 My feet, whose life were at his will !
 At my one word made tame and still—
 My lion couchant at my feet.

To place my hand between his teeth,
 Great gleaming teeth that make one pale,
 And play with his long, dangerous
 tail—
 Yes, place my two hands in his teeth.

And I should like to have him *know*
 His strength, yet let me lead him round,
 To Médor's cast-off ribbon bound—
 Indeed, I'd like to have him know.

How I could love a pet like that !
 Could lay my fearless cheek on his,
 Press on his wild eyes kiss on kiss—
 How I could love a love like that !

What does the poor wind want to-night?

It sighs like a soul in need—

O art thou in the sinner's plight,

So let me intercede!

O hast thou lost what is most dear,

So let me help to find,

O art thou troubled with strange fear,

God comfort thee,—poor wind!

But if thy woe, poor wind, be this:

Thou mourn'st o'er no true thing,

Only a foolish, fancied bliss,

Thy heart's own fostering,

That failing leaves thee chilled and old

In wasted misery—

I know thou canst not be consoled,

So let me sigh with thee.

TO A WEED.

YOU bold thing! thrusting 'neath the very nose
 Of her fastidious majesty, the rose,
 Ev'n in the best ordained garden-bed,
 Unauthorized, your smiling little head!

The gardener,—mind,—will come in his big boots
 And drag you up by your rebellious roots,
 And cast you forth to shrivel in the sun,
 Your daring quelled, your little weed's life done.

And when the noon cools and the sun drops low
 He'll come again with his big wheelbarrow
 And trundle you,—I don't know clearly where,—
 But *off*—outside the dew, the light, the air.

Meantime——ah, yes! the air is very blue,
 And gold the light, and diamond the dew,—
 You laugh and curtsy in your worthless way,
 And you are gay—ah, so exceeding gay!

You argue in your manner of a weed,
 You did not make yourself grow from a seed,
 You fancy you've a claim to standing-room,
 You dream yourself a right to breathe and bloom.

The sun loves you, you think, just as the rose,
He never scorned you for a weed,—*he knows*,
The green-gold flies rest on you, and are glad,
It's only cross old gardeners find you bad. . . .

You know, you weed, *I quite agree with you*,
I am a weed myself, and I laugh too,—
Both, just as long as we can shun his eye,
Let's sniff at the old gardener trudging by!

*Alas! in eyes once tender to discover
That no signs of the ancient love remain,—
Once gladder for your smile's most fleeting favour,
No sadder now for your most perfect pain.*

*To hear lips, whilom in their faith unswerving,
Pronounce your name as it were not your name,
And look up, chilled, to note their careless curving,
And ask your soul if they can be the same.*

*Alas! to be forgotten!—and remember,
With memory become such bitter bliss!—
O love, at night within my silent chamber,
I pray you may not know such woe as this.*

L'ENNUI.

IT is a strange, grey woman with dull eyes :
 Her lips and cheeks are wan and nowise red,
 Like ashes when the ardent splendour dies,
 And clouds wherein the colour sweet is dead ;
 Grey temples veined with sombre violet
 Her heavy, sheenless, raven locks, perfumed
 With scents that pall, fall back from and
 reveal ;
 Her eyes' lustreless jet,
 That leave the tired face all unillumed,
 Long-fringed, shadowy eyelids half conceal.

No fierceness in her lips : a sad and long,
 Deep, quiet, time-abiding cruelty.
 She stands behind my door : her hair is strong,
 With one long tress she waits to strangle me.
 E'en when sweet Joy is by and clasps my hands,
 I cannot in the beaming eyes of her
 Forget that other's full of weary pain ;
 I *feel* her where she stands
 Behind my door, although she does not stir,
 And know when Joy has left she will remain.

She glides from out her covert quietly,
 And seats herself by me ; places her hand
 Across the page I read, and presently
 Of all the singing lines I understand
 But this, that no more pleasure is therein ;
 She points unto the sky : Always the same !
 White clouds, much barren blue, a little gold,
 The same—month out, month in !
 Then to the earth : The dull tale often-told !
 Oh empty life ! Happiness, empty name !

She kisses me on the reluctant lips :
 Savours of dust and wilting roses !—breathes
 Into mine ear, as to her knees she slips
 And round my throat her lamia-like arms
 wreathes,
 And I, too listless to rise and resist,
 Yield unto her, “What profit hath a man
 Of all his trouble under the sweet sun ?
 Unwept for and unmissed
 Takes to his tomb after life’s little span,—
 And what he doth, who cares that he hath
 done ?

What is the good? What is the good? What worth
That one should toil, with sweat and many
pains?"

And other words her faded lips pour forth,
That fall like subtle poison through my veins ;
Till, wearied even of her weariness,
I shake her off and cast her far from me,
Crying "I will not listen, say no more!"
And loosed from her caress,
My spirit stands up straight, god-like and free—
—And yet I know she lurks behind the door.

Roam I in solitude
'Neath the moon's flame,
Join I the throng to yield
Custom her claim—
Floats o'er my eyes a dream,
Always the same.

Over the revel scene,
Masking and mirth,
Over the scenes of strife,
Danger and dearth,—
Floats in its splendour strange,
Not of this earth.

Faithful and tender dream,
How far the day
When these realities
Shall fade away,—
Thou be the living thing,
And the dream they?

OLD PROBLEM.

THERE was a Thing ; but not the Thing itself
 Knew what it was, and none was there to
 say,
 And so the poor Thing puzzled day by day,
 “What can I be? What is this strange myself?”

One pure sigh from the sweetest flow’r that grows
 Came wafted to it o’er a garden fence,
 And thrilling with a mystic kindred sense,
 The poor Thing thought, “Perhaps I am a Rose?”

“But no! the careless bees prove otherwise.
 Perhaps—I joy so when the high lark sings!—
 I am a Lark—but then, where are my wings?—
 A bird not only joys in song—but flies.”

To sadness the Un-named began incline,
 “Perhaps,” it hoped, “this yearning after height,
 This great, blind instinct tow’rd the purer light,
 Denounce me kin to the aspiring Vine.

“Alas! I cannot climb who could not soar!
 No doubt I am a clod of vilest earth,—
 But, *if* so abject, mean, and little worth,
 Whence these divine deep longings at my core?”

*My little child, love thou the Rose,
 For on her satin stem
 How good, see now, how fair she shows :
 By loving fair, good things, one grows
 Perchance somewhat like them.*

*Yet, O my little child, love too
 Yon nettle where he stands,
 So spiteful, ugly, harsh to view,—
 Didst thou imagine, child, the dew
 Fell only on fertile lands?*

*For, little child, a nettle's fate,
 Think, how it must be sad!
 And how love by the hundredweight,
 At best, could scarcely compensate
 For being ugly and bad.*

OTHER PAUSE.

NOW are the first few milestones over-past,
 My higher sun now clears his stronger
 glance ;

Now tread my long-impatient feet at last
 The promised land of mine inheritance.

Here let me linger on my forward way,
 And look behind to see where I have been,—
 Alas, the border where I sleeping lay !
 So far, the pearly air bedims its green.

I almost would my steps I might retrace,
 Or sooner, that, my journey not begun,
 I still were lying with my happy face
 Exposed to the mild kissing of the sun.

I would resign the knowledge for the dream !
 Take back, O Destiny, things as they are,
 For I will be content with what they seem
 From those enchanted borders now so far.

My Promised Land is great and very fair ;
 The water of its wells is cool and clean
 And sweeter than all wine,—but wells are rare,
 I almost die for burning want between.

The forests of my trees are green and great,
 There flowers grow in bright, abundant sheaves,
 There pigeons coo, and thrushes jubilate,—
 But all the ground is littered with dead leaves.

The distant temple that against the sky
 Showed outlines of a dim unearthly grace,—
 My stately temple!—now seen closer by,
 Is not so far removed from commonplace.

Undreamed of features, as I still draw near,
 Loom up behind the veil of haze grown thin,—
 My heart recoils with sudden doubt and fear,
 “If—after all—my temple were an inn? . . .”

Yet, be not thou disquieted, my heart,
 Albeit dust lies thick upon thy flowers,
 And faint with sore, tormenting thirst thou art,
 And springs unfrequent, and reviving showers.

Nay, though thy much-desired pilgrim-goal,
 With bleeding feet attained, prove less than
 shrine,—
 Yet kneel and let the pure pray'r of thy soul
 Lend to that lure thus much that is divine.

Be not disquieted : for soon thy ways
 Have brought thee to the further border-line,
 Whence looking back, the same great golden
 haze,
 Has closed upon this Land Possessed of thine.

And o'er the real the dream shall float again,
 A new illusion on the lost one's build,
 These gaps and flaws that fill thine eyes with
 pain,
 With misty charities themselves be filled.

And thou shalt cry, "Land promised to my
 youth,
 My age proclaims thy promise sweet was kept.
 Fair and more blessed hast thou proved in sooth
 Than I had dreamed when on the bourn I
 slept."

Then sigh, "But rest is good,—long rest and
 deep,"
 And lay thy whitening head on the warm sand,
 And in the fading sunlight fall asleep,—
 Still smiling, on the utmost border-land:

*And then?—Then when the roses
Were ripe, they went to seed.
And then?—Was seen a white scar
Where once a wound did bleed.*

*And then?—After a little
Hope found she might not stay.
And then?—Then as the year waned
The swallows went away.*

*And then?—They laid the hero
Among forgotten men
Low in the lone God's-acre,
Beneath a stone—And then?*

THE QUEEN'S LUTE PLAYER.

THE QUEEN'S LUTE PLAYER.

THESE hands thou seest gloved with steel
 Were wont not long ago
 To hold a lute instead of lance,
 Whose strains the sweetness did enhance
 Of many a softly sung romance.

I was lute-player to the queen ;—
 For when our king was wed,
 His word was uttered through the land,
 The sweetest of the minstrel band
 Should own the new-made bride's command.

So song-tourneys were held ; and I
 A dreamy, idle youth,
 In whose cold bosom love of fame
 Slept like a lion tired and tame,
 Felt at the mention of her name,

La Reyne Gilette, and at accounts
 Of her bright loveliness,
 The sleeping thing stir and awake :
 My lute in secret did I take,
 (My heart's hard beating made it ache,)

And softly slipped, in the red dawn,
 Forth from my kinsfolk's house ;—
 The reason I did shift and hide
 Was boyish fear lest they should chide
 My boldness, and laugh at my pride.

The lists were set in a green field
 All gemmed with precious flowers,
 And gilded with the sun's true gold ;
 Beneath a giant tree an old
 Grey-bearded man sat throned ; they told

Me that was Lucques,—one long ago
 Renowned for his high song.
 The warriors of that day looked mild,
 Those knights with poet-faces smiled,
 Nor could have awed the least girl-child.

Their locks were freshly chapleted
 With green, and noting it,
 I broke a slim twig from a tree,
 And twisting it as it should be,
 Crowned my own wild hair, blushingly,

And stepped into the ranks of those
 So goodly champions.
 Then, as I stood there in the hum,
 My heart failed ; strange fear made me dumb :—
 I almost wished I had not come.

And hot my side was with my heart,
 While my hands shook with cold.
 But soon the queen came to my mind,
 And all the gentle stories twined
 About her name, and her faced tined

The sunlight with the radiance
 My dreams had lent to it ;
 And I said, “ Surely such an one
 Is worth a man the risk should run
 Of some slight humiliation.”

I felt for my good instrument :
 It seemed to know my hand,—
 And I bethought me how the thing
 Was used to slavish echoing
 Each pulse that stirred a faint heart-string

Within me ;—with exultant joy
 That flushed my erst pale face,——
 How it *must* serve me in my need,
 Since we twain had been friends indeed,
 Such as the Arab and his steed.

I scarcely heard them when they sang,
 Those others, each in turn.
 I seemed to listen through a dream,—
 Awhile I had a feeling dim,
 “Lucques will award the palm to him.”

For still I tracked my haggard thoughts :
 Built and again rebuilt
 Fair phantom castles in which yet
 Passed and repassed *La Reyne Gilette*,
 Such as in dreams her I had met.

And now my turn came,—and, in faith,
 I know not how it chanced,—
 When I ceased came a breathless pause,
 I glanced at Lucques filled with vague awes,—
 His face all wet with weeping was.

And then—then it appeared that I
 Had gained my dear desire :
 That I, Foulquet, one that had been
 To that day scarce heard of or seen,
 Should be lute-player to the queen.

There is an hour when the earth seems
 To hold its breath and wait :
 A faint light shimmers o'er the hill,
 And presently the white moon will
 Rejoice the seas that lie so still.

My life had reached that point ; my soul,
 Intent, with bated breath,
 Waited the rising of its moon,—
 The cloudless, gracious plenilune
 That with glad light should flood it soon.

Up to that day, of everything
 I had been used to say,
 "In the meantime," "This while I wait,"
 Expecting some great boon from Fate
 To find me, waiting, soon or late.

I had a groundless faith in it,—
 Dreamer of idle dreams !
 Some splendid love should mark my lot,
 Some strange good fortune seek me out,
 Some glory make me unforget.

I used to lie beneath the trees
 Picturing all those things
 In each slow-wingèd cloud that passed ;
 Yet lay my life where it was cast,
 And each day found me as the last,—

Till, when I heard my kinsfolk speak
 Of the melodious joust,
 A longing I cannot define
 Possessed that sluggish heart of mine,
 So wild, I took it for a sign,

And sudden grown adventurous,
 Came, sang, and won my end.
 I will not tell of that first night
 What happy virgils kept, what bright
 Dream-visions seen with sleepless sight.

“Farewell, old life ; farewell old home,
 Sweet and monotonous !
 Eventless days, haunts over-known,
 Dear trees that with my growth have grown,
 Familiar faces ! I am gone.

“My fortunes lie in kingly courts,
 In fair highways of life ;
 Old tearless griefs, old pulseless joys,
 Farewell !—my moondawn lights the skies,
 My white moon is about to rise !”

One sunset I came to the gates
 Of her home, La Gillette ;
 That night in all her queendom's scope
 Was not one heart so gladly lope,
 One breast so heaving high with hope.

How fair my young life looked to me,
 O God, that sunset hour
 Melting away in orange-gold !
 When I, bashful at once and bold,
 Doubted and paused on her threshold...

And now, lights swimming in mine eyes,
 I knelt at some one's feet,
 "Foulquet Trélunes am I, madame—
 They called my father Bonne-lame—
 I come to offer thee mine arm—

"My life to be spent in making lays
 In praise of thy mild eyes—
 My name—my name have I revealed,
 Foulquet Trélunes ; and on my shield
 Three argent moons in azure field—

The poet, Lucques, who was our judge,
 Said *I* must come to thee—
 And I—indeed—I have said all—"—
 Standing above she seemed so tall ;
 She waved a hand so white, so small,

It held mine eyes I dared not yet
 Lift to her face ; I rose ;—
 More than one merry honour-dame
 Was laughing at my foolish shame,—
 My hot cheeks hotter still became.

But kindly spoke the queen to me,
 " Heed not these saucy girls !
 We know, sweet sir, they'll laugh not long
 When thou shalt sing for them the song,
 Won thee this honour from the throng."

And so indeed it proved ; for when
 In frequent after days
 I sang that song, they never laughed :
 Still in the quiver each witty shaft,
 Forgotten ; tear-dews in the soft

Eyes of Germaine, Berthe and Mireille,
 Flamenca, Jaqueline—
 Ah, me ! those happy after-days !
 Those sad, mad, merry, tender lays
 I sang for them ! and the rose-sprays

Nodded above us ; and the queen
 Listened with half-closed eyes,
 On one palm resting her smooth cheek—
 And then at some word she would speak
 We all would play at hide-and-seek,

Like merry children, o'er the grass
 Running and laughing loud,
 Dishevelled and undignified—
 I always knew where she did hide :
 Her slim hound would not leave her side.

It was my duty sweet at eve,
 Beyond her arrased door,
 Or 'neath her lattice, as might be,
 To make some drowsy melody,
 That she might dream more pleasantly.

I used to stand beneath the stars
 And let my soul find voice
 In songs most like a murmured prayer,
 That softly, softly mounted where
 She went to sleep in her long hair.

She was so like a little girl,
 At times, that mighty queen ;
 Her laugh rang 'mong the merriest,
 In her rose-garden with the best
 She played at balls and sang and raced.

Even as a wreath of woodland flowers
 Set on her hair for sport,
 She lightly wore her jewelled crown ;
 Her brows with love-locks overblown
 Were ruffled never with a frown.

How everything was glad of her !
 It seemed even the flowers
 Brightened and flushed as she went by ;
 To meet her the shy doves would fly,
 The sunshine followed her,—and I,

I had not long lived where she lived,
 When she became to me
 The sun unto the *tournesol*—
 God love her for her pitiful
 Eyes made to comfort and make whole

A world of all its wounds and woes—
 God love her for her eyes !
 God pity me though He condemn—
 For surely He lit their soft flame,—
 That I must lose for love of them

All but that love ;—all hope of good,
 Of peace, of calm delight,
 Of blessedness, life being done,—
 For vain, void dreams through which they
 shone,
 My sole wealth then, my stars, my sun.

I never knew how it began ;
 Only, I grew to be
Aware of her where'er she stayed,—
 Cool court where with her dames she played,
 Turret, or hall, or garden shade ;

Aware of her as though my breath
 Had to do with her lips ;
 My seeing with her eyesight good,
 My humour with her casual mood,
 My very life with her sweet blood.

I had to use more strength than needs
 A monster-slaying knight,
 To stand beneath her eyes and greet
 Her with words common and discreet,—
 Nor kneel and madly kiss her feet.

Sweet saint ! even as a saint will pass
 In dread appeals to God
 Between the red flames unafraid,
 She passed me by with careless tread,
 Nor seemed to know the flames were red.

Each night I wrestled with my guest,
 My demon-angel love,
~~U~~Till day-break, and at day prevailed,
 And held it closely bound and veiled,
 So that none knew what I concealed.

I thought I was so strong : I thought,
 “ I will be silent still,
 From now to my last living day ;
 Cannot I kill this love, I say,
 Let this love kill me,—well it may.”

I thought I was so strong ! I said,
 “ A love so hid away
 Cannot be wrong, and I may stay
 To see her smile still at my gay
 Lying, light-hearted *triolets*,

“Finding reward enough in that.”

Yet soon after those words,
One night must I pray late—so late!—
For absolution from the hate
I felt swell in my hot throat, straight

Mine eyes fell on the king. I prayed,—
Yet even the next day,
At his returning from the chase
The sudden softening in her face
Made me turn white and flee the place.

Thus do the hard gods make us blind :
Not clearly warned enough,
I said,—I thought I was so strong!—
“Better than dragging life along
Away from her,—this keen, this long,

Tormenting pain of every day
In the same air she breathes.”
And still my love grew without food,
Till I, with all my fortitude,
To keep it stifled scarce was good.

And in the end there came a day,
 (The fiends smiled as it dawned),
 When all the battles I had fought,
 My victories so dearly bought
 With heart's-blood, were made vain and
 naught.

It was mid-summer ; the blue air
 Quivered with hot perfume ;
 No least wind in the drooping trees ;
 Sounds at the roses' hearts of bees
 'There nestling in murmurous ease.

An evil day : a sun of flame
 Made the dogs pant for thirst.
 The eyes ached with the glare and gleam
 A deadly drift of poisonous steam
 Girded the sky at the extreme.

There was not air enough to breathe ;
 The eyelids yearned for sleep,
 Yet what damp, hot sleep one might get,
 Such bad, uneasy dreams did fret,
 They made awaking better yet.

So still from utter weariness,
 The earth seemed in a swoon.
 The Queen, languid with the great heat,
 Lay cushioned in a dim retreat
 Of her rose-garden, nigh too sweet.

I had been soothing her with songs
 Sung scarce above my breath,
 String-music sedative and bland,
 When, the broad leaf with which she fanned
 Falling from her relaxing hand,

I glanced up and saw that she slept—
 O my white mistress-queen!
 I held my breath—then to the core
 Sore-troubled, rose, and hurried o'er
 The garden's rose-strewn grassy floor.

On through the hot sun to the woods,
 I fled as if from fiends,—
 Yet was it a dear saint I fled,
 Asleep with one soft arm and dead
 Folded beneath her ruffled head.

I ran, ran madly through the gloom ;
 Then suddenly stood still :
 And all in me that's bad and low
 Effecting reason's overthrow,
 I cried, "*Why* should I suffer so ?

" Why should I struggle with this thing
 I never can subdue ?
 Why must what is in others bliss,
 In my cursed life be all amiss ?
 My God, why must I starve like this

" What shall I have for my reward
 For all this pain I stand,
 Renouncing her completely,
 When not one thing matters to me
 In all the world,—but only she !

" Hear me all halidom ! I'll go
 There where she sleeps alone,
 Seize her in my strong arms, my prey,
 And carry her away,—away !—
 Whether the hated world say yea or nay ! "

Hard at her hand I stood once more,
 In the luxuriant close ;
 The thin weft wherewith she was drest
 Scarce wavered with her gentle breast,
 So deep and placid was her rest.

Her fresh lips, like a timid rose,
 Half opened for the air ;
 Upon her dewy brows that day
 The little clinging ringlets lay
 In such a babyish, sweet way.

In her cheek,—like a rosy pearl
 Against the cushions red
 Scented and sewn with things of worth,
 In foison strewn on the warm earth,—
 A dimple showed, worn deep with mirth.

And on her lids a shadow lay,
 Like summer-evening skies
 Tenderly blue, that with its hint
 Of sadness, a vague new grace lent
 To that deep-delvèd dimple-dent.

The rose-trees made her a green shade
 Studded with rosy lights;
 The sunbeams interrupted it,
 Now here, now there ; now softly lit
 Her hair, now o'er her feet did flit.

Above her head a rose had pined,
 Whose velvety faint leaves
 In windless cadence raining down,
 Had starred her tresses' fervent brown,
 Her simple white, unqueenly gown.

My instrument I had let fall
 When myself suddenly
 Myself filled with such dire alarm,
 Lay just beside one perfect arm
 Whereon the circling gold was warm.

My madness vanished as a mist,
 As I stood there and gazed
 Tears did the beauteous vision blur,
 "Fool, what hast thou to do with her?
 The earthy worm with the white star!"

Then, knowing all my days to come
 How hopeless sad ! I cried,—
 Outwearied with the long, long strife
 Against love for that sweet king's wife,—
 “ God, what shall I do with my life ? ”

And sudden pity for myself
 Surging in my worn heart,
 I cried,—outwearied utterly,—
 “ O God, show me some way to die !
 My God, give me this gift,—to die ! ”

Unmanned, I tossed up my two arms
 In vehement appeal,
 For some kind bolt to strike me there,
 Beside her, and the rose-sweet air
 Take my poor soul, so wearier

Than any sorely-burthened thing
 In all the world before—
 When, suddenly, a rustling sound
 Came to mine ear—I glanced around—
 He !—he !—the King. With one wild bound

My heart dispelled its melting mood.

A hard flame dried my tears,
 Dumb fury did my breast inflate,
 My teeth were set in mortal hate.
 He—he—the King! the Good,—the Great,

He—bitterly—the Faultless One,
 Who dared to touch her hair;
 He, the unvanquished yet in war,
 Whose name thereafter as a star
 Should shine where names of heroes are!

So many reasons for ill-will
 In me, his virtues clear.
 Through lowering brows I saw his face
 Wherein the smooth symmetric grace
 Was marred by one deep falchion-trace.

How great he was! How great and strong!
 I seemed a child by him.
 By his face with his dense black beard,
 With frequent long sun-kisses seared,
 Even as a girl's my face appeared.

I, too, had loved that strong man once ;
 His deeds compelled to love :
 Every one loved him !—even she !—
 But now the thought was gall to me
 Of all past love and loyalty.

The consciousness that with one hand
 He could slay me at will,
 The vague sense that even as his state,
 His nature was than mine more great,
 Made me no slower in my hate.

Nearer he came, humming a tune ;
 The sun was full on him :
 Broad brows of one made to command,
 Rich-blooded cheeks and temples tanned,
 Crisp beard he stroked with one brown hand.

No doubt he came to seek his queen—
 The devil woke in me.
 “Die will I !—but with his own sight
 He shall learn this thing : that a mite
 Can sometimes work a giant spite.”

Still he approached, humming that tune,—
 One I had made. I said,
 “One breath—and all is at an end :
 He will have stabbed me with his hand.
 And she,—well,—she will understand.

“ Surely they owe me that,—one kiss !—
 For my life that I lose,
 Adored lips that have been my bane.
 Die shall I as none else again :
 On a Queen’s lips, by a King slain.”

And now he stood arm’s-length from me,
 Our eyes were each on each ;
 He must have seen the angry glare
 Of mine extinguished in despair,
 As I bent o’er the slumbering fair,

And laid my lips on hers that had
 Bereft me of my peace—
 Oh, tenderly, as in Goodbye,—
 Hotly, as loving,—solemnly,
 As one that is about to die,—

For sure I thought, so help me God
 In my last need! ere I
 Could lift my face from that supreme
 Kiss, to come by my death through him,
 Wash out my guilt in my life's stream.

Through sense numbed by my heart's hard
 pulse,
 And blinded, brimming eyes,
 I have remembrance of this sight:
 How, waking, she put forth her white
 Arms to him, who stood at her right

Concealing me, and softly said,
 "Kiss me again, my King,"
 And he said simply, "Ah, *ma belle*,
 How warm it is! Hast thou slept well?"
 And I, behind the trees I fell,

Compelled by some dumb strength in him,
 And waited for him there,
 Face earthwards in a bed of thyme,
 To come and slay in his good time,
 His grand lips curling with sublime

Contempt for me. How long I lay
 I know not. From the sky
 The stars looked down with all their eyes,
 When I heard in a pause from sighs,
 His voice say gently, "Child, arise !"

Even as a child, obedient,
 I rose. Beneath the stars
 We stood, mute ; one, I weet, death's hue.
 Then, reaching him my sword I drew,
 I said, "Do that thou hast to do."

And as he took it not, nor spoke,
 I cried impatiently,
 By something in his eyes oppressed,
 "Delay not. See,—I bare my breast.
 Long have I sighed for this,—death's-rest."

"Art thou so very weary then,"
 The King said, "of sweet life,
 And all that to sweet life belongs,
 Thou, so young yet to know of wrongs,—
 Thou little singer of sad songs?"

And I said, "Weary—weary, lord
 In guerdon of my sin
 Could not I claim right to be slain,—
 As a hurt dog I'd claim it then,
 Whom one slays to put out of pain."

He eyed me long, as pitying me,
 Then said, "Thou world-worn wight!
 Thy lips bloom 'neath their first soft down,
 And childish gold gleams on thy crown
 Confused amid the manlier brown.

"What moves thee? say, what hast thou
 known,—
 What suffered? Where hast gained
 That wild look in thy weeping-wet
 Drear eyes? What hast thou to forget?
 What"—and I moaned out loud "Gilette!"

Her name rang through the stilly trees,
 Stirring the shadowy leaves.
 The night was musical with it,
 The whole air suddenly made sweet
 With sleepy effort to repeat.

We both stood still, quite still awhile,
 In the faint light of stars.
 At last he said, "Where clarions blow
 To call mine armèd knights to row
 For battle,—whither thou shalt go,

"Thou mayst repeat that lady's name
 As that of some high saint,
 Invoking it in every plight
 As one the name of Mary might,—
 But never here after to-night.

"Stripling, because I understand
 Thy folly that's divine,
 Thy glorious insanity,
 (She is *so* lovely, is not she?)
 Therefore I kindly banish thee.

"Are there no hard wars to be fought?
 Go thou. Take this my sword.
 Use thou *my* life to glory's end—
 Thy life is mine,—in war defend
Mine honour that to thee I lend."

I bent my knees, crushed. He went on,
 "Thou hast not injured me.
 Think'st thou, lad, thou couldst do me wrong?
 Or any man all men among?
 My love's a fastness perfect-strong.

"Between us twain no man shall come
 So long as stars may last,
 No man, no deed, no thought, no word—
 Therefore, seest thou, I can afford
 To honour thee with this good sword,

"And say, God speed thee on thy way,
 And keep thee where thou go'st.
 Yet—yet—sweet lad, remember this:
 Had she known of that coward kiss,
 This hand and sword that never miss

"Their blows,—just for the insult's sake
 Laid on her pure, true lips,
 Had stretched at her avengèd feet,
 Thy frame of sweet life incomplete—
 Therefore rejoice, for it is meet,

Not for thyself, but her,—so spared ;
 For if I deem aright
 Ignoble art thou not nor rude—
 Love for Gillette makes a man good !—
 Thee did thine ardent youth delude ” . . .

These hands thou seest gloved with steel
 Hath no lute known since then.
 In the red field whither we hie,
 Brother-at-arms, such deeds have I
 To do, that if I come to die,—

As I pray for a glorious death
 In midst the hot mellay,—
 My King may say to my Queen's ear,
 “ He died without reproach or fear ;
 Pray for his soul a little, dear.”

And to his own heart must he say,
 “ He once did a base thing ;
 But since that hath his honour gleamed
 So bright, his mem'ry is redeemed
 From all stain, and shall be esteemed

“ Even as the memory of one
 Who never fell ”—and she,
My Queen, shall say with eyes grown sad,
“ God have him in His great wings’ shade,—
Poor youth !—what pretty songs he made ! ” . . .

BUTTERFLIES.

O FANCIES mine, my butterflies
 You seem so fine when high in air,
 I guess you sweet, I dream you fair,
 With foolish, following eyes.

The world, then, must inspect your dyes.
 And so the chase is swift and hot ;
 I laugh at last when you are caught,
 Poor, flimsy butterflies.

Alas! the net has torn your wings,
 My hand, you are so frail and faint,
 Has brushed off half your pretty paint,
 Small, soft, misused things.

Frayed and discoloured, pinned askew
 In a pretentious little book,
 How different, how tame you look !—
 And yet I love you, too.

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